FIRST RECORD OF THE BUTTERFLY *PITHECOPS DIONISIUS DIONISIUS* (BOISDUVAL) (LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE) FROM THE AUSTRALIAN MAINLAND

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Abstract

Nine specimens of *Pithecops dionisius dionisius* (Boisduval) (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae: Lycaeninae) are recorded from Cape York Peninsula, northern Queensland. These constitute the first mainland records for this New Guinea butterfly, the only other Australian recording being from Darnley Island in Torres Strait.

Introduction

Pithecops dionisius (Boisduval) is a small, shade-loving lycaenid butterfly which is common and ubiquitous in New Guinea. Its inclusion in the Australian fauna has been on the basis of a single male from Darnley Island in Torres Strait between New Guinea and Australia (Waterhouse and Lyell, 1914). It has not previously been taken on the Australian mainland. Therefore it is of interest to record here the capture of nine specimens during 1977 at two widely-separated localities; Lockerbie Scrub and Iron Range, both in Cape York Peninsula.

Lockerbie Scrub is an area of rain forest situated approximately 7 km south of the tip of Cape York Peninsula and about midway between Bamaga near the west coast, and Somerset on the east coast adjacent to Albany Island. This area was extensively worked by European collectors during last century when Somerset was occupied. Iron Range is a more extensive area of rain forest located about 225 km south of Cape York and approximately 10 km inland from the east coast. Extensive collecting has occurred in the latter area in recent years (Monteith and Hancock, 1977).

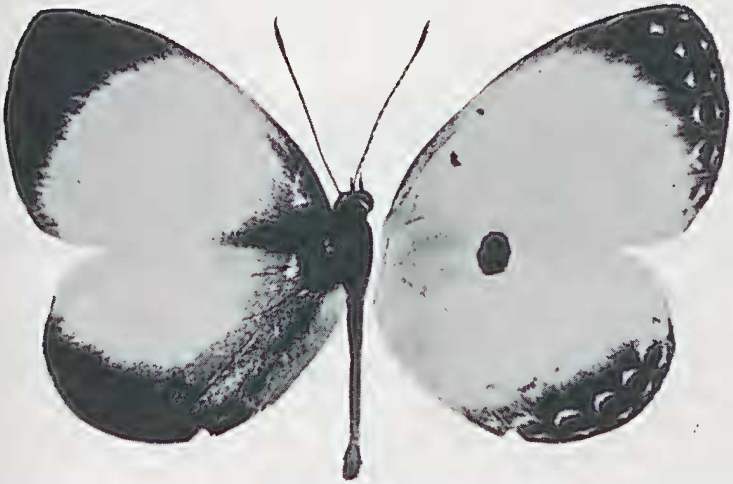
Material cited

NORTH QUEENSLAND, CAPE YORK PENINSULA: 1 ♂, Lockerbie Scrub, 7-13.iv.1977, J. W. C. d'Apice; 2 ♂, 2 ♀, Iron Range, 15-20.iv.1977, M. Walford-Huggins (in J. W. C. d'Apice Collection); 2 ♂, Gordon's Creek, Iron Range, rain forest, 12.iv.1977, Anthony Hiller (in Anthony Hiller Collection and Australian National Insect Collection); 1 ♂, Lamond Hill, Iron Range, 4.vii.1977, G. B. Monteith (in Queensland Museum); 1 ♂, Iron Range, 20.v.1977, D. Binns, along road in rain forest (in D. Binns Collection).

Discussion

The treatment of the species in Seitz (1922) recognizes seven subspecies as follows:

Pithecops dionisius dionisius (Boisduval)	Throughout New Guinea
P. d. peridesma (Oberthur)	Northern Moluccas
P. d. euanthes Fruhstorfer	Southern Moluccas
P. d. bassaris Niceville	Key Islands



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Figs 1, 2. *Pithecops dionisius,* upperside (left), underside (right): (1) ♂ from Lockerbie Scrub, 7-13.iv.1977, J. W. C. d'Apice; (2) ♂ from Gordons Creek, Iron Range, 12.iv.1977, Anthony Hiller.

P. d. staphylus Fruhstorfer	New Britain, Duke of York Islands and Kiriwina
P. d. oinopion Fruhstorfer	Shortland, Alu, Fauro, Florida and Tresor Islands
P. d. steirema Druce	Gaudalcanal

Waterhouse and Lyell (1914) describe the specimen taken on Darnley Island as belonging to the nominotypical subspecies and illustrate it in their Figure 279. The Australian material considered here (Figs 1-2) compares well with this specimen as well as with specimens in the collections of Dr A. Sibatani and Anthony Hiller taken in the New Guinea localities of Wau, Port Moresby, Sogeri, Tapini, Madang and the Morobe District. This is as one would expect, considering the proximity of Cape York to the New Guinea mainland.

The condition of the specimens taken on Cape York Peninsula indicates that they had recently emerged, thus negating the possibility of their being vagrants from New Guinea. The flight of this species is weak and slow (Fisher, 1977), not unlike that of the satyrid *Hypocysta angustata angustata* Waterhouse & Lyell, which also occurs at Iron Range. All specimens were taken along rain forest edges where they flew close to the ground.

Recent collecting at Iron Range has produced no more specimens of this lycaenid, but any collectors visiting the area in the future may be fortunate enough to locate it again. According to Fleming (1975), another species of this genus which occurs in Malaysia, *Pithecops corvus corvus* Fruhstorfer, has as its food plants *Gardenia florida* and Leguminosae. It is possible, therefore, that the larvae of *dionisius* will be discovered on plants of these groups in Cape York Peninsula.

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